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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003929

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [I2](#)

SUBJECT: SADRISTS LIKELY TO BACK CONSTITUTION

REF: (A) BAGHDAD 3898 (B) BAGHDAD 3887

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. In conversations earlier this week, Sadrists and affiliates told PolOff that Muqtada al-Sadr will tell his people to vote in favor of the constitution in the October 15 referendum. They dismissed reports that Sadr is opposed to the constitution as rumors spread by Sadr's opponents. Throughout the conversations, PolOff stressed that Sadr should pursue his goals through the political process and not through violence. END SUMMARY.

Sadr Will Support Constitution, Some Say

12. (C) PolOff met with Sadrists TNA members Nassar Zgair Darbi al Ruba'i (September 18) and Kareem al Bukhati (September 19), as well as with Sayed Emad Kelanter, who runs a religious school in Najaf and is related by marriage to both Muqtada al Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Sistani (September 21). They all told PolOff that Muqtada al-Sadr supports the constitution and will tell his followers to vote in favor of it in the referendum to be held October 15. Nassar al Ruba'i and Kareem al Bukhati both said that Sadr plans to make a public announcement to his followers after copies of the constitution have been distributed to the Iraqi people. They also reported that Sadr is not opposed to federalism, as conventional wisdom holds. All three reported that Sadr realizes that no constitution will fully satisfy any group. According to them, Sadr views the constitution as "good for the Shia".

13. (C) During these conversations, PolOff stressed that Sadr should pursue his objectives through the democratic political process and not through violence. The USG wants the Iraqi Government to maintain law and order in Iraq. The deployment of militias is not acceptable and will cause problems with Coalition Forces, he cautioned.

A Dissenting View in Public

14. (C) By contrast, Dr. Jawad Sumaysim, brother of top Sadr aide Ali Sumaisym, was quoted September 19 by the Iraqi newspaper Al Kasid as saying that when Sadr called for his followers to register for the upcoming elections, he was not necessarily telling them to vote in favor of the constitution. Sumaisym added that Sadr still has some reservations about certain provisions in the constitution, especially federalism.

15. (C) COMMENT: We have no firsthand knowledge of how Muqtada thinks and, as noted in reftel, he remains a key wild card in the upcoming referendum. Our Shia contacts claim that Sadr would never cross Ayatollah Sistani should the latter publicly support the draft constitution (he has not done so yet). Sadr has avoided making common cause with the emerging Sunni Arab campaign to defeat the draft constitution, however (ref b). The aforementioned conversations were held with Sadrists who have a vested interest in continued engagement in the political process. They also are comparative moderates among Muqtada's followers. Nonetheless, their similar comments indicate that at least some in Muqtada's movement are counting on their leader supporting the constitution. We suspect Sumaysim's comments may have aimed at boosting Sadr's electoral standing among Sunni Arabs, as the Sadrists eye the December elections. END COMMENT.

Khalilzad